

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5870

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 3, 1999

Title: An act relating to insurance coverage of pharmacy services.

Brief Description: Requiring coverage of pharmacy services.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Wojahn and Sellar.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/25/99, 3/3/99 [DP-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; Costa, Deccio, Franklin and Winsley.

Staff: Christopher Blake (786-7446)

Background: Pharmacists may obtain prescriptive authority to administer certain types of drugs in accordance with written guidelines or protocols. Some feel that pharmacists should be compensated by health carriers for performing these services.

Summary of Bill: Disability insurance contracts, group and blanket disability insurance contracts, and health care service contractors must not deny benefits for services performed by a licensed pharmacist if the service is within the pharmacist's scope of practice and the contract would have provided benefits for the service if it had been performed by a licensed physician.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 22, 1999.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Other health care professionals receive compensation for these services; the absence of pharmacists is an oversight. Compensation to pharmacists for these services provides greater access to cost-effective services which saves money for the health care system.

Testimony Against: This bill makes patients pay twice for the same covered service. This is a mandated benefit that increases the cost of health care.

Testified: Holly Whitcomb, WA State Pharmacists Assn. (pro); Don Downing, WA State Pharmacists Assn. (pro); Mel Sorenson, WA Physicians Services (con); Jim Halstrom, Health Care Purchasers Assn. (con).